

Havertown, PA – This morning, Congressman Joe Sestak (PA-07) exchanged memories and commemorated with fellow Veterans at the Annual Veterans' Day Brunch for Jewish Veterans at the Suburban Jewish Community Center B'nai Aaron. This event was part of the Congressman's Veterans' Day Weekend tour of the 7th Congressional District. Over 50 members of the Jewish Community Center congregated at the brunch to pay tribute to local Jewish Veterans as well as their families.

— “Jewish Veterans have made significant contributions to the success of the United States military and it is imperative that we recognize and appreciate their service to our nation,” said Congressman Sestak. “I would like to thank the SJCCBA for its efforts to honor Jewish Veterans and their families and for welcoming me to this cordial and important event. I was able to speak at this event last year and it was tremendous so I was very grateful when Rabbi Yasgur extended the kind invitation for a second year in a row.”

During the brunch, Congressman Sestak spoke in greater detail about the contributions of notable Jewish Veterans, specifically those of Solomon Silas Isquith, Rabbi Alexander Goode, and Joseph Kashnow. The Congressman relayed the story of Solomon's youth as a Jewish boy growing up Brooklyn in the early 20th century and the great lengths to which he went as a boy in order to represent his country in the Navy. When Solomon learned that at 5'4" he was too short to pass the physical at the United States Naval Academy, he tied flat irons to his ankles and placed them over the side of the footboard of his bed the night before his physical in order to grow to the appropriate height. Miraculously, it worked. Solomon became the Commanding Officer of the USS Utah, stationed in Pearl Harbor, which was the first ship sunk by the Japanese on December 7, 1941. Solomon organized and executed a rescue mission that day which led to the survival of more than 90 percent of the crew. He was subsequently awarded the Navy Cross and the Purple Heart. Solomon concluded his career as a Rear Admiral in the Navy and was instrumental in the design of a national defense strategy that was used as a model for the modern Department of Homeland Security.

“The contribution of Jewish Veterans to the United States is invaluable,” Congressman Sestak stated. “They exemplify the true meaning of courage, compassion, and patriotism and are an inspiration to us all. I am committed to preserving the legacy of the men and women who have served our nation and to ensuring that Veterans and current soldiers receive the respect and the support they deserve.”

The Congressman concluded his remarks with a commentary (a midrash) on the Torah to describe the wonderful characteristics that these Veterans exemplify. In the story, a businessman from the land of Israel traveling in a foreign country is found guilty of spying and sentenced to execution. He is allowed to return to Israel for 30 days by having a friend take his place in prison with the stipulation that the friend will be hanged if the man does not come back within the 30 day period. When a storm delays the man's return, it appears the friend will be hung; however, the man arrives moments before the hanging. He insists that he is to be

punished, not his friend, while the friend argues that it is too late, and to still hang him. The king, hearing the argument, asked to see them and, after listening to them both, allows them to go free under the condition that he can be their "third friend."

Born and raised in Delaware County, former 3-star Admiral Joe Sestak served in the Navy for 31 years and now serves as the Representative from the 7th District of Pennsylvania. He led a series of operational commands at sea, including Commander of an aircraft carrier battle group of 30 U.S. and allied ships with over 15,000 sailors and 100 aircraft that conducted operations in Afghanistan and Iraq. After 9/11, Joe was the first Director of "Deep Blue," the Navy's anti-terrorism unit that established strategic and operations policies for the "Global War on Terrorism." He served as President Clinton's Director for Defense Policy at the National Security Council in the White House, and holds a Ph.D. in Political Economy and Government from Harvard University. According to the office of the House Historian, Joe is the highest-ranking former military officer ever elected to the Congress.

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